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Dumb are mine advocates to mine appeal;  
 High in their pride my scorers raise their crest;  
 They quench my light, they darkly do conceal  
 My welfare and my rest.

O Lord, my God! all strength doth dwell in thee,  
 O hear my voice, as humbly here I bow;  
 And let the sentence of thy judgment be,  
 "Take thou my blessing now<sup>1</sup>."

Behold me fallen low from whence I stood,  
 And mine assembly with compassion see;  
 And this my soul, mine only one, 'tis good  
 To give it unto thee.

Take back thy son once more, and draw him near,  
 Hide not from him the radiance of thine eye,  
 Turn not away, but lend a favouring ear  
 Unto my plaint, my cry<sup>2</sup>.

NINA DAVIS.

### THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

*Suggested by the annexed fragments from the Talmud.*

There is a legend full of joy and pain,  
 An old tradition told of former years,  
 When Israel built the temple once again  
 And stayed his tears.

'Twas in the chamber where the Wood Pile lay,  
 The logs wherewith the altar's flame was fed ;  
 There hope recalled the Light of vanished day,  
 The Light long fled.

A priest moved slowly o'er the marble floor,  
 Sorting the fuel in the chamber stored ;  
 Frail was his form, he ministered no more  
 Before the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxiii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Lam. iii. 56.

Wrapt in deep thought, with sad and mournful mien,  
 Plying his axe with oft a troubled sigh,  
 Dreaming of glory that the House had seen  
 In days gone by.

Mused of the time when in the Holy Place  
 God's Presence dwelt betwixt the Cherubim,  
 And of the day he turned away his face,  
 And light grew dim.

When the Shechinah from that erring throng,  
 Alas, withdrew, yet tarried in the track,  
 As one who ling'reth on the threshold long  
 And looketh back.

Then step by step in that reluctant flight  
 Approached the shadow of the city wall,  
 And lingered yet upon the mountain height  
 For hoped recall.

The Temple standeth, pride of Israel's race,  
 Yet resteth there no sacred Ark of Gold,  
 God's Glory filleth not the Holy Place,  
 Ah ! loss untold.

Surely the glory of the House is o'er,  
 Gone is the Presence, silent is the Voice ;  
 They who remember that which is no more,  
 Can they rejoice ?

Convulsed, a sacred spasm seized his frame,  
 The axe fell from his trembling hand's control,  
 A fire leapt upward, and the burning flame  
 Consumed his soul.

His eyes were fixed upon the ground, he gazed  
 Upon a stone of that smooth marble plain,  
 Which seemed as from its place it had been raised,  
 And set again.

Into his heart there flashed prophetic light,  
 With sudden force the secret was revealed ;

Nought but one treasure sacred in his sight  
Lay there concealed.

As one of Heaven bid, who dare not wait,  
With step grown firm as with the strength of youth,  
He hastened to his comrade to relate  
The wondrous truth.

His hand uplifted, and a light sublime  
Shot from his eyes and like a joy-beam shone ;  
He seemed a holy seer of olden time  
To look upon.

Yet from his parted lips no message came,  
In silence reached he his immortal goal,  
And from its dwelling in the earthly frame  
Went forth his soul.

Soon o'er the house flew sad and strange reports,  
And men and women bristled at the sound,  
And priests came swiftly from the sacred courts,  
And thronged around.

Piercing the crowd a woman made her way,  
Seeming to own a right which none gainsaid,  
And neared the spot where that calm figure lay,  
The priestly dead.

And reverent to the prostrate form she passed :  
Pressing her lips upon the peaceful brow,  
She whispered, " Thy desire hath come at last,  
'Tis granted now."

Then spake the High Priest, " Wherefore dost thou thus ?  
Is the dead thine that thou hast spoken so ?  
And knowest thou the secret hid from us,  
Which dealt the blow ? "

" O priest, it is according to thy word,"  
She answered, " And I know that secret well,  
He, as he breathed his last, the message heard  
And that did tell."

"Woman, thy tongue is false, thy word untrue,  
Yon priest divulged nought with his dying breath,  
Nor uttered sound, ere to his heart there flew  
The shaft of death."

"My lord, thy servant lieth not," she said,  
"His soul departing did to mine unfold  
A glorious light, and as his spirit fled  
The tale was told.

"Oft have I stood in prayer in yonder court,  
And marked that weak, wan figure, worn with care,  
Transformed by heavenly light, and sacred thought,  
To beauty rare.

"On ye, O priests, his longing eyes were bent,  
While at the altar ye your charge have kept,  
And oft a sigh so deep the silence rent,  
In prayer I wept.

"And I have read this day his life's fair dream,  
And in his death have seen that dream fulfilled,  
The longing of his heart, the wish supreme,  
That faith instilled.

"Say ye, God's Ark is captive far away?  
And weep ye, Ichabod, the glory fled?  
And mourn ye that the brightness of the day  
Is quenched and dead?

"Maybe 't is true that in a far-off land,  
The Ark of God in exile dwelleth still;  
It resteth ever with the pure of hand  
Who do his will!

"Know then, ye priests and Levites, Israel, all,  
Hid in its place the Ark of God doth lie,  
His Presence hath not gone beyond recall,  
But bideth nigh.

"Behold Thou comest as the dawn of day!  
Shechinah! changeless, to illume the night!

O thou, who art a lamp upon the way,  
Who art a light!

"Haste, brethren, let the gates asunder burst,  
Regain the Ark, the Covenant hold fast,  
And by the glorious Second House, the First  
Shall be surpassed."

She ceased, and silence cast its shackles o'er  
The awe-struck crowd; her shadowy form moved on:  
With God-lit eyes, she stood a moment more,  
And then was gone.

So was that death with life's quintessence crown'd;  
The truth illumined each inquiring face,  
For all knew then God's Ark would yet be found  
Within its place.

NINA DAVIS.

Rabbi Eliezer saith: "The Ark hath gone into captivity unto Babylon, as it is said, 'And at the return of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him<sup>1</sup> to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the House of the Lord.'"

Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai saith: "The Ark hath gone into captivity unto Babylon, as it is said, 'Nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.' This referreth to the Ten Words which were enshrined therein."

Rabbi Judah (ben Lakish) saith: "The Ark is hidden in its place, as it is said, 'That the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place before the oracle: but they were not seen without; and there they are unto this day.'"

And where it is written "unto this day," it is always understood to mean for ever.

And the sages say, "The Ark was hidden in the chamber of the Wood Pile."

Rabbi Nachman bar Isaac saith: "I likewise have received a tradition. It is related of a priest, who, while wrapt in contemplation, perceived that one of the stones of the pavement differed in appearance from the others. And he forthwith went to apprise his comrade;

<sup>1</sup> Jehoiachin.

but before he had ended his words his soul went forth. And they knew of a truth that there the Ark was hidden."

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There was a tradition with the disciples of Rabbi Ishmael, that two priests, who were maimed, were examining the wood (to be burnt upon the altar), when the axe of one fell, and a flame went forth and consumed him.

*Talmud Babli, Yoma, pp. 53 b and 54 a.*

..... There were thirteen places of prostration in the sanctuary. But in the time of Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Chanina, the second High Priest, they prostrated themselves at fourteen places. And where was the additional place? By the Wood Pile; for they had received a tradition from their fathers that the Ark was hidden there. It is related of a priest, who while wrapt in contemplation, perceived that one of the stones of the pavement differed in appearance from the others. And he forthwith went to apprise his comrade; but before he had ended his words his soul went forth. And they knew of a truth that there the Ark was hidden.

*Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim, ch. 16.*

The Shechina withdrew by ten stages.

From the Mercy-Seat to one Cherub, from one Cherub to the other, and from the Cherub to the Threshold, from the Threshold to the Court, from the Court to the Altar, from the Altar to the Roof, from the Roof to the Wall, from the Wall to the City, from the City to the Mount, and from the Mount to the Wilderness. From the Wilderness it ascended and abode in its place, as it is said, "I will go and return unto my Place."

*Talmud Babli Rosh Hashana, 31 A.*